

THE DISCIPLE - - - whom Jesus loved
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(John 13:23)

This statement indicates that John enjoyed a special place in the affections of the Saviour. The Master loved all His followers; yet for some undefined reason an inner circle of comradeship existed within the wider ranks of the disciples: only Peter, James, and John accompanied their Lord on certain missions. Yet it is most interesting to note that even within this inner circle of loyal friends, John occupied a place of pre-eminence. He became known as the disciple whom Jesus loved; and the statement suggests a challenging question. How did John gain this place of distinction in the affairs of his Master?

THE SPECIAL PLACE . . . He leaned upon the
Master's bosom (John 13:23)

"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." The Lord's intimation of the forthcoming betrayal shocked His followers, and they found it difficult to believe that one of their number would be a traitor. Spontaneously they cried, "Lord, is it I?" But it was left to John, who leaned against the Saviour's breast, to whisper the question, "Lord, who is it?" We read in the Gospel that the disciples quarrelled in regard to the seats of honour in the kingdom. Every man aspired to greatness, and the fact that two of their brotherhood had secretly conspired to obtain the places on either side of the throne, filled them with disgust. A first-class row seemed to be approaching, when Jesus gently intervened. Yet we do not read of their quarrelling in regard to the privilege of leaning on Christ's bosom. The disciples possibly considered John's action to be a little effeminate. He saw their frowns of displeasure, but remained indifferent to their scorn. He was not content to remain a yard away from his Lord when he could be near enough to hear the softest whisper.

THE SPECIAL PRIVILEGE . . . "Behold thy mother"
(JOHN 19:26-27)

"When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." When Jesus entrusted his dearest earthly possession to the care of John, He conferred upon him the greatest honour. Yet with the honour went a great challenge, for John was asked to enter into the life of Mary to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Jesus. This was not an easy task; but when John's arm went around Mary's shoulders, it became obvious that he had accepted his Master's command. The Lord Jesus realized that John was completely trustworthy; His mother would be perfectly safe in the new home. Perhaps John's quiet contemplation on the bosom of Christ had prepared him for this great moment. Only those who have leaned on Christ's bosom are fit for the more intimate responsibilities of the kingdom.

THE SPECIAL PERCEPTION . . . "It is the Lord"
(John 21:7)

The pale silvery light of a new dawn was slowly spreading over Galilee's waves when the tired fishermen brought

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their fishing vessel toward the beach. "Then Jesus saith
unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered
him, No. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right
side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and
now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of
fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto
Peter, It is the Lord." While the remaining disciples
struggled with the fish, John calmly looked through the
morning haze to recognize his Lord. He had very good
eyesight! Neither the mists of the morning nor the storms
of life could impair his vision. He occupied such a place of
intimacy in the affections of the Lord Jesus that reciprocal
love awarded him the great honour mentioned in the Scrip-
tures. He became the disciple whom Jesus loved. There
were three reasons why he deserved his reward. (i) When
the other disciples thought of a kingdom, John drew nearer
to Christ. (ii) When they ran for safety, John lingered at
the cross to shelter a helpless woman. (iii) When they
struggled to land a catch of fish, John forgot all earthly
gains and rejoiced in the nearness of his Lord.

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